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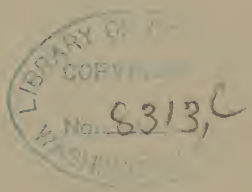

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PREFACE.

The contents of this volume appeared originally in the pages of *The Southern Review*, April, 1872. It was an article reviewing the "History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, by Rev. A. H. Redford, D.D." The treatment of the subject comprehended both the facts and the philosophy of the history, exhibiting the import as well as the justification of the separate existence of the M. E. Church, South, and keeping in view the question of the reunion of the M. E. Churches, which

has been pressed upon the attention of the Southern Church in various forms by the Church, North. The discussion of the subject in that article has given universal and profound satisfaction to the Southern mind, and its republication in this form, for preservation as well as wider circulation, has been called for by numerous requests reaching us from every quarter of the Connection.

THE PUBLISHERS.

THE

M. E. CHURCHES,

NORTH AND SOUTH.

The relation of the Methodist Episcopal Churches, North and South, to each other, is exciting considerable interest, and a good deal of discussion, more or less intelligent. It is assumed, in certain quarters, that slavery was the cause of the separation of the Church into two organizations, and that slavery being now out of the way, the *casus belli* no longer exists, and that the unification of Methodism ought to ensue. This view of the case is often urged with the noisy boldness so natural to flippant talkers, who are voluble in proportion to the inadequacy of their conceptions. The easy flow of innocent

platitudes upon this subject, with which the public ear is every now and then inundated, is matter of curious interest to men well informed as to the facts. At the same time it gains a ready credence with many who never see in contemporary events anything more than what appears at a glance. Such persons perceive only the profile of events—only outline sketches of things. They do not view the picture close enough, nor with sufficient deliberation, to perceive the more minute features, and those subtle lines which give it all its life and meaning.

The coloring in which most men see events is taken from their own prepossessions and sentiments. The disinterestedness necessary to an accurate judgment is rarely attained. Only here and there a man sees things in a dry light. In most cases the rays are colored and refracted by the opinions and feelings f the observer. The consequence is, that the object is seen out of its place, in false relations and in a false aspect. Its very charac-

ter is misconceived, and its import lost or distorted.

This is eminently true where men are themselves interested in the case. Prejudice warps the understanding, and prejudice is supreme where it is reinforced by interest. The man who can rise above this is "one of a thousand." The understanding that can disengage itself from selfish leanings, and maintain an equable poise amid the beguilements of feeling, is quite above the plane of ordinary humanity.

There is no more prolific source of prejudice than *party feeling*. The intense partizan never sees any significance in a fact that militates against his party. At the same time he exaggerates the value of every incident that favors it. Things are to him very much what he makes them. Facts are never safe in his custody. His narrative is so exaggerated in what he gives, and so mutilated by what he withholds, that it is never true. He lives in an unreal world. With him, at least, "things are not what they seem."

Their appearance is in the tinge of his own passion, and he judges by that, so that he never reaches "a righteous judgment."

Partizanship never runs so high as between parties nearly related to each other. Family feuds are proverbially bitter. The fierceness of the contest is in the ratio of the closeness of affinity. A brother offended is the last man in the world who will listen to reason. He sees absolutely nothing but his own side of the quarrel, and hears nothing but what justifies his own cause. Both eyes and ears are sealed against everything that goes to vindicate the other party. A sleepless sentinel guards every avenue of perception through which an adverse fact might make its way to the understanding. At the same time the very proximity of the angered parties is the occasion of constant recurrences of provocation. The challenging voice is ever in reach of the susceptible ear. Recrimination and aggravation of the strife are inevitable. No friendly silence comes to hush the wrongs of an unhappy past into

oblivion. The antagonistic presence stimulates the din of furious words, and so the repellent force is maintained, if it is not, indeed, augmented.

All these facts embarrass the discussion of the relations between the two Methodist Churches. We enter upon the topic fully aware of this. Nor do we claim exemption from the common weaknesses of humanity. We make *no* special claims, we deprecate no criticisms, friendly or adverse, but submit our analysis of the facts, demanding of interested readers only such honest effort of candor as they may be able to attain unto, for there is the same obligation of candor on their part as on ours.

Our treatment of this topic will keep in view the question of the reunion of the Churches. This question was opened in a semi-official way by the Bishops of the Northern Church, in a communication made by them to the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at their meeting in St. Louis, in the spring of 1869. It was also

brought before the General Conference at Memphis, in 1870, by a commission acting avowedly upon the authority of the General Conference of the Church, North. It has become apparent, also, in various ways, that a large party in the Northern Church is favorable to the reunion, and, indeed, earnestly desirous of its consummation.

Our discussion of the question, then, is not gratuitous. It is a vital question of the day, one that must be met in a practical way. It is a question for the present and the future, which the representative men of the Church must deal with for good or for evil. The whole ground must be well considered, in a spirit purified by prayer and elevated as far possible above the plane of partizanship and passion. We have in trust the Church of the future—the Church which is to embody the Christian faith, and be the organ of its transmission to the American people when the census shall be reckoned by thousands of millions. It behooves us to have a care that we do nothing to impair either its effi-

ciency or purity as a medium of "the faith once delivered to the saints." If we send a feeble stream down into the great future of this continent, it will be lost in the sands. If we send a tainted one, it will diffuse death through a countless multitude.

A first question to be considered is, the immediate effect of reunion, if it should be accomplished. What would be the result in the two parts brought together? Would the union be mechanical or vital? If merely mechanical, what condition would arise? If vital, what would be the predominant force in the process of assimilation? Would the new unit be a homogeneous body? If so, what would be its character? If not, what would be its condition? We do not propose to examine the ground covered by these questions in a formal way. The questions are suggestive, and some, if not all of them, may recur in the course of this article. At any rate they offer topics upon which every man must pause before he can rest in a matured conclusion.

There is a popular sentiment in favor of union upon general principles, because union abstractly taken is a good thing. Union is the expression of love, and love is the very essence of religion. Truly this is so. Let no man gainsay it.

The ear is often beguiled by fair speeches, and men rush impulsively upon conclusions that are suggested by the premises, but not contained in them. We talk about union, the thing that every good man desires, and take it for granted that the churches have nothing to do but just to flow together and be one. External organic unity does not necessarily produce real union. The bringing of antagonistic elements into too close organic relations is often the cause of the most violent disruptions. Let us labor toward union, therefore, wisely, and if necessary to that, leisurely. Let us see to it, that the conditions of union are present before we attempt unification. He is an ignorant chemist who does not know that there are some classes of substances that will never unite to produce a homogeneous amalgam.

The two Methodist churches must be cleared of everything not proper to them as Methodist churches before they can, in any true sense of the word, *be one*. If there has come to exist in either one, or in both of them, that which is antagonistic to the other, and alien to Methodism, it must be purged away. Otherwise, any attempt at mere organic unity must aggravate the antagonism. It is but folly, then, to be talking about union upon a mere impulse of sentiment, unless we are prepared to make thorough work. Better nothing than a mere botch. Let the churches not come together under conditions that will insure another explosion. Peace and good neighborhood in two houses is better than internecine war around one hearthstone. No wedlock is better than hasty marriage and a quick divorce. Yet marriage is the best, no doubt, if the parties are prepared for it.

One thing is obvious at a glance. In case of reunion, the Northern Church would give its character to the whole organization. In

the united General Conference its majority would be decisive of all questions. The policy of the reunited Church would be the policy of the Northern party. Their views of ecclesiastical polity and of current policy would control the body. The Southern wing would be in a hopeless minority. It might lift an earnest voice in the discussions, but at the end of a week's debate that voice would be silenced by the final vote. That vote would be the voice of the whole Church to the public, and direct its policy and its affairs. And whatever of intelligence, of numbers, and of character the Southern Church had brought along with it, these would only add volume to the power of the united Church. Whatever movement the majority might inaugurate, it would move onward with a momentum augmented by the full weight of the Southern Church. For, however Southern men might resist the governing majority, the policy of the Church as a unit, dictated by the majority, would command just so much the more respect, and

carry just so much the more force, as the added numbers and respectability of the Southern Church might amount to. This view is taken upon the supposition that there are important questions upon which the mind of the two wings of the Church would be in conflict. Whether this may be true, and if so, what may be the nature and import of the questions of difference, will appear as we proceed.

Whether the Northern or Southern Church would be the governing element, as a mere question considered in itself, is one of no consequence. As it is a mere question of relative power, we care nothing for it. In a matter so grave as this no trivial issues must be allowed a place. The question is, whether the Southern Church can safely trust her destinies to such custody. In view of all the facts, can she turn over her trusteeship of souls into the hands of the majority that would rule the united Church. Into this matter the Church, South, must look thoroughly before she gives up her liberties and

her very being. She may possibly do an act in a day that coming ages may deplore in vain. One savory mess of pottage may cost a birthright, and no place of repentance be found afterward, though diligently sought with tears.

The other side of the question demands equally candid and earnest consideration. It is not impossible that the remains of passion, from the provocations of former times, may influence Southern men. An antipathy against Northern control, in view of recent history, is, perhaps, inevitable. It were more than human to be wholly free from it. Such a feeling may affect even the counsels of godly men more than they are aware. If the separate existence of the Southern Church is to be maintained, just to gratify the prejudices of its members, the approbation of God will most surely be withheld.

The passions of the war are already greatly mitigated. With any thing like a just administration of the affairs of the General Government in the Southern States, they would

soon die away entirely. But however politicians, or even political ecclesiastics, may fan the smouldering embers of embittered feeling to serve paltry, personal, or party ends, Christian men will "seek peace and ensue it." They will do whatever may be consistent with truth and compatible with vital interests to promote the return of the era of good feeling in the country. For this they will sacrifice anything, except their fealty to truth and righteousness. By every impulse of the regenerate heart, and every consideration of duty, good men will promote the triumph of love. If the Church, South, has no reason for continued separate existence other than the passions of the war, let her be blotted out. If, indeed, her organization from the first was merely in the interest of slave property, as her enemies assert, then she never had any just title to existence, and the sooner she perishes the better

Southern Methodists owe it to themselves, to the world, to the truth, and to God, that they be not governed by that first blush,

profile view of things, which excites recrimination and resentment against the Church, North. They must act upon a candid, unselfish judgment, formed in view of all the facts as they appear in the light of essential, moral, and Christian truth. They must ascertain whether the great ends of their existence as a Church are likely to be furthered or obstructed by the proposed union.

Does the Southern Church stand for anything as against the Northern? Does it embody any principle vital to the Christian commonwealth that the other does not? Is it, as a Methodist organization, the *sole* custodian of any truth of high value in the ecclesiastical constitution? If it should unite with the Church, North, would it alienate any trust that could not safely be committed to the Church into which it would be merged? Could it be assured that all the vital ends of its own existence would, in that case, be realized?

No Church has any right *to be*, unless it stands for something. It must embody and

conserve some truth, some principle, some great matter of Christian interest that no other Church does, or it has no just title to existence. It must be charged with some portion of God's work that no one else is at hand to do, and that no one else can be trusted with, or its presence among the churches is an intrusion and an impertinence. But if it have in hand some great work that no one else can be trusted with, then its existence is not only justified, but imperative. To alienate its existence is to betray its trust. Its members cannot disorganize it without incurring guilt. God holds them to account for the work He has given them to do, and they cannot destroy the body which is the instrument provided by the Head of the Church for doing it.

This is the test by which the question of reunion must be tried in the Southern Church. Merged into the larger body, it will be lost, and if it have any thing distinctively in trust, that, too, will be lost with it.

The import of the existence of the M. E.

Church, South, must be determined by its own history, and by the events which led to its organization. For this purpose the publication of a volume by Dr. Redford, entitled the *History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, is opportune. Dr. Redford is entitled to the gratitude of the public for a work so timely and so well prepared. It is, to a great extent, compiled from the Journal and Debates of the General Conference of 1844, by which the separation of the Church into two independent organizations was initiated; and of the Louisville Convention, held in 1845, by which the movement was consummated. The original matter is candid, judicious, and in good temper.

It has been often affirmed, as we have already intimated, that slavery divided the Church. On the other hand, it has been affirmed that not slavery, but *abolitionism*, divided the Church. Each party states the case as it appears from his own stand-point. Another statement still is, that slavery was

not the *cause*, but only the *occasion*, of the division; that it furnished the occasion upon which other and deeper issues arose, and that upon those other issues the Church divided. We shall endeavor to ascertain and bring out the exact truth, so far as in us lies.

That the institution of slavery played a conspicuous part, as a fact, in the events which led to the division of the Church, there can be no question. But this is stating the case in a loose way. More accurately, it was upon *the relation of the Church to the institution of slavery* that all issues arose. Upon its introduction into this country, Methodism spread with greater facility in the slaveholding than in the non-slaveholding States. Its early conquests were chiefly in the Middle and Southern States. Slaves and slave-owners were converted, and came into the fellowship of the Church together. The case of the slave-holders troubled the early preachers. They were Englishmen. British philanthropy at that time had concentrated itself pretty much upon the emancipation of

slaves in the colonies. The British conscience had become sensitive, if not morbid, upon the subject of "man's property in man." Conscience was largely developed among the Methodist people, and, as a consequence, the prevalent sensitiveness on this point was conspicuous among them. The preachers who came to America brought the British conscience along with them. They came to an English-speaking country, and found English ideas on this subject largely prevalent already. Many slave-holders themselves were so from the force of their hereditary relationships, and not from choice. The British conscience was, therefore, rather encouraged, and it attempted to realize the British philanthropy in the Methodist societies. The effort was made to enforce emancipation of slaves as a condition of membership. This effort failed from the very outset. It was utterly impracticable. Unless the emancipated slave was a man of uncommon intelligence and energy, his relations to society made freedom ruinous to him. Every

consideration of good feeling, as well as interest, impelled the master to hold his slaves under his own guardianship. The law, rarely executed, was soon modified. Even in its modified form it was little more than a dead letter. Several changes of the impracticable statute followed each other. Disabilities on account of slaveholding were removed from all but official members, and from them, except in those States where the law permitted emancipation, and allowed the emancipated slave to enjoy freedom. There was, in fact, no such State among the slaveholding States, upon a large interpretation of the terms of the law; and so the ecclesiastical statutes on the subject of slavery amounted, in effect, only to the space they occupied on the pages of the Book of Discipline. Partly, no doubt, through the influence of interest, partly from habit, and partly, too, from a rational view of the case, the Southern conscience became quiet upon the point of slavery. In proportion as the Southern conscience came to be at rest, that

of the North became more and more unquiet, until at last its twinges came to be insupportable. There is a perverse psychological law, by virtue of which we feel the sins of other people more acutely than our own. The Northern people were in this unhappy relation to the institution of slavery. The mote, or beam, or whatever it was, was in their brother's eye, and was, of course, excruciating to them.

In the General Conference the two consciences, the positive and negative, were in contact. These were not magnetic poles, for the positive and negative repelled each other. From time to time in the quadrennial assemblages there was high debate and grave compromise, until at last the contending forces seemed to be about as nearly in equipoise as possible, and something like peace spread a beautiful placidity over the face of the Church.

So matters stood at the time of the vernal equinox, A. D. 1844. The trusted men of the Annual Conferences had been chosen,

and from the St. Lawrence to the Rio Grande, from the Delaware to the Missouri, they were preparing to come together to greet each other in the Lord, and project new conquests for his name.

So matters stood a month later, and the elect men of the Church, some by ships at sea, some on steamboats, many in stage coaches of the old style, and others on horseback, were converging toward the city of New York. Some few were in easy reach by railroad—only a very few.

So matters stand as the sun of the last April days smites the empire of death with the silent, quiet power of his rays, and, breaking the invisible chain from the latent life of field and forest, calls it forth in the vernal resurrection. The Methodist homes of the great city are astir with hospitable preparation, and the unknown guests are coming in. Brethren greet each other complacently, and cordial reunions from the North and from the South give happy augury of peace. Men of God say to each

other, "we shall have no disturbing issues at this session." The ecclesiastical heavens were never more serene. The genial spring was in men's hearts and faces, as well as in the fields, and the Church itself seemed rejuvenescent under the beneficent touch of a spiritual spring-time.

But all at once agitated lips begin to whisper into astonished ears, "Bishop Andrew is connected with slavery." These words are the knell of peace. They invoke the demon of discord. Clouds and tempests gather there, upon Manhattan Island, and sweep over the whole Church with malignant fury.

Bishop Andrew must be deposed, or at least restrained from the exercise of Episcopal functions. So the representatives of the Conferences in non-slaveholding States demand, and they are in the majority. They have things their own way. Bishop Andrew, therefore, must desist from exercising the functions of his office.

Why? Has he violated any law of the Church? No. Has he violated any law of

the State? No. Has he violated any law of God? No. Does not the specific law of the Church governing such cases hold him harmless? Yes. What law has he violated, then? The law of the Northern conscience—this, and no other. And the tribunal before which he was compelled to appear was the *Northern conscience.* It was an inexorable tribunal, which trampled all law under its feet, except its own inspirations.

Here was an honored man, in the highest office of the Church, virtually deposed, although he had violated no law, and although in what he had done he was held harmless by specific statute. The assault upon Bishop Andrew was an assault upon the law of the Church. The anti-slavery faction was in the majority, and acknowledged no restraint of law. It would work its own will over the head of all law.

Against this the members of Southern Conferences entered their solemn protest, and demanded a division of the Church. The majority met the demand with great magnan-

imity. The famous Plan of Separation was adopted by a vote that was well-nigh unanimous, providing for the division of the Church into two independent jurisdictions, and an equitable partition of all the property held by the Church. The proposed division was to be effected upon a contingency of which the Southern members were themselves to be the judges.

With remarkable unanimity the lay members of the Church in the Southern States demanded the consummation of the Plan of Separation, for the matter was submitted to the vote of the laity. The majority calling for division was as ninety-five to five. The contingency provided for was adjudged to have been met, and in a Convention, held in Louisville, Kentucky, in May, 1845, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized according to the provisions of the Plan of Separation.

In the light of these facts we are to prosecute our inquiry after the cause of the division of the Church. In addition to these

facts, we have also the debates of the General Conference pending the case of Bishop Andrew, and also in an appeal case from the Baltimore Conference at the same session. These debates reveal the spirit of the parties, and the *animus* of the movement on both sides.

Two positions, insisted upon by Southern men, bear upon our question with especial significance.

The first was, that the institution of slavery *lies in the domain of the civil magistrate.*

The Church courts, they maintained, have no right to act upon it. They have the right to insist upon the discharge of all duties growing out of the relation, by their members, whether they be masters or slaves. But as to the relation itself, it is a matter that belongs to the State. In legislating upon it the Church invades the domain of the State. All intermeddling with it by the Church is intrusive. It is a civil institution, and not subject to ecclesiastical animadver-

sion. They maintained that the Church must respect it as a civil institution wherever it was established by law and entered into the constitution of society. The question of slavery does not lie in the category of essential morals, but belongs to a class of relations over which the State has legitimate authority.

It was charged by the opposite party that the arguments of Southern men on this point involved the supremacy of the civil legislature in matters established by the moral law; that if its enactments could render slave-holding innocent, they could render theft, or murder, or adultery innocent. The Southern doctrine involved no such horrible consequences. It did not affirm that the civil power might assert itself over the domain of fundamental morals, so as to make right wrong, and wrong right. It affirmed that slavery is not a question of morals, but an institution of the civil state, and for the proof of this it appealed to Christ and the Apostles. They encountered this question

on all sides. They found the world full of slaves and slave-owners. There was the most imperative demand upon those who gave law to the Church to condemn slave-holding, if it was a breach of the moral code. Yet they received the slave-holder without rebuke as a brother beloved. The New Testament law prescribes to masters the just treatment of their slaves, but never once forbids the relation. The attitude of the Scriptures on this subject is just what we would expect if it were regarded as a civil institution.

Imagine Christ silent as to the relation of husband and wife! Here is a relation that rests on the basis of essential morals. It belongs to a category that is above the jurisdiction of the State. Putting away wives, and marrying wives that have been put away, are acts in violation of the marital bonds. The Son of God spoke with no bated utterance on this point. On a question of absolute morals he never hesitated to speak.

But as to whether governments should take the form of absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, oligarchy, representative republic, or absolute democracy, our Lord was silent. One form may be better than another. But it is a question of expediency, not of absolute morality. Each form may be liable to great evils and abuses. The king may be a despot. The republican leader may attain to power by corrupt practices, and use it for corrupt ends. But it is not wicked to be a king, nor to be a republican leader. Every people must have a government, and each nation may properly give its government the form best adapted to the character and condition of its people. The magistracy may be hereditary or elective, as may best comport with the common weal. So precisely as to the form in which the relation between capital and labor realizes itself. No doubt there are peoples incapable of government on the elective principle. In such case it is right and best that power should be hereditary. There may

be vagrants upon whom labor must be made compulsory for the public good. There may be ignorant and incapable masses in which there must be enforcement of labor, more or less rigid, for their own good and for the public peace. With respect, then, to the form which the relation of labor and capital shall take, as well as to the form which government itself shall take, the civil State is free to realize the conditions adapted to the facts present, and most conducive to the general welfare. These are not questions of essential morals, but of the public good. All governments set some limit to the liberty of the individual. If civil government has the right to restrict personal liberty for the common good to any extent whatever, it has the right to carry the restriction to any extreme that may be necessary to secure the end.

We can well see, then, not only the fact, which is indubitable, that Revelation has remitted the question of slavery to the civil magistrate, but also the reason of the fact. It belongs to those relations in which human

society must realize the conditions which may comport with its own well being.

With respect to slavery, then, the Southern preachers in the memorable conflict of 1844 took exactly the attitude maintained by our Lord and the Apostles. They denied all right of ecclesiastical legislation in the premises. Whatever the Christian citizen may have to do with it belongs to his relations as a citizen, not as a church member. In a republic, unquestionably, if the people are Christian, the Christian conscience ought to realize itself in civil as well as ecclesiastical legislation. But the Church, *as such*—the Church in its organized capacity, in its legislation—has no right to enter the political arena. She always comes out of that sort of contest with soiled robes and a disfigured face.

On this issue the Southern Conferences were inflexible. They would render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. They would not consent to be dragged into a contest with the State in a matter over which

the jurisdiction of the civil authorities is clearly recognized by the Scriptures. They could not be made party to a crusade against that which had passed without animadversion under the eyes of inspired men, and of the Lord himself. They were *not* propagandists of slavery. Such a charge was made, but it was both false and malignant. Individuals among them, no doubt, did utter pro-slavery views. But the Church, South, in her ecclesiastical assemblies, and in her pulpit, took the Apostolic attitude. She left civil institutions to the State. She did never constitute herself the champion of slavery. She was simply the custodian of the Gospel, "both for the master and the slave."

On this issue the Methodist people, North and South, parted from each other.

The Methodists of the South held that in those affairs ascertained by Scripture to lie within the domain of the civil magistrate, the Church may not intermeddle: that the institution of slavery is ascertained by Scrip-

ture to lie within the domain of the civil magistrates; therefore, the Church may not intermeddle with it. The Church must keep to her own affairs. She has no more right to trench upon the domain of the State than the State has to trench upon her liberties.

This was the issue. The question was, whether the Church had the right to interfere in affairs purely political. The South said no, and could maintain her negation only through a separate ecclesiastical organization. She had no alternative but to be involved in a conflict with the State in a case in which the jurisdiction of the State was unquestionable, or separate from the Northern Church.

It is a remarkable fact that few, if any, of the Northern delegates went the length of affirming that slave-holding was a sin, *per se.* There seemed to be among them a clear perception of the fact that, under some circumstances, a man might own slaves and be a holy man. A man might buy a slave for the purpose of rescuing him from the

power of an inhuman master. *That* would not be wicked. Doubtless there were many cases in which the very best thing that could be done for a negro was that some good man should own him. The good man, then, would do right to own him. It follows that the mere fact of owing a slave is not wicked. This conceded, the fact of slave-holding is removed from the domain of pure ethics, and takes its place legitimately among civil institutions. It may be the best possible thing for a large class of men that they should have masters; and if it is, then the State, which is bound to realize the best possible condition for all, may establish this relation. It is the best possible thing for boys to be under the control of their fathers, for apprentices to be under the control of masters. No one sees any wrong inflicted in compelling a vagrant to work. Yet that is slavery.

But the fanatical conscience is never very logical; and, doubtless, the great majority of the Northern people, including the dele-

gates in the General Conference of 1844, saw horrible sin in slavery. It was not only an evil, but a *moral evil.* So said some who yet would not name it a *sin.*

There was clearly much confusion of ideas among them; but, at any rate, whatever might be the relation of the State to this question, these preachers were resolved to make war upon it.

Mark what followed. From this point of departure, the General Conference of 1844, the Churches, North and South, went their several ways. Possibly there were but few men in either who fully comprehended the diverse tendencies that were then already established, and which acquired immense momentum from the agitations of the occasion. The tendency of the Northern Church was to plunge into politics; that of the Southern, to abide by the work of the gospel exclusively.

There is an unconscious logic in the course of events. Sequences are sure to be realized in organized communities, though they are

not comprehended by the individual understanding. Probably no man of the majority in 1844 understood himself to be committing his Church to a political career. But the unconscious logic was obliged to realize itself. These ecclesiastics had charged themselves with affairs that belonged to the civil government. If any man had said to Olin, or to Finley, or perhaps even to Peck, at that time, "in the course of ten or twelve years your Annual Conferences will be raising committees on the state of the country, and adopting fiery political resolutions, identifying the Church thus, in an official way, with one of the political parties of the country," they would have replied, "Are thy servants dogs that they should do such a thing?" But, alas! they themselves had set the Church to work upon a civil institution of the country, and the unconscious logic could not but reach its result.

As early, we believe, as 1856, the New England Conferences began to raise "committees on the state of the country." These

committees never reported on the *spiritual* state of the country. They always reported *political platforms*, which identified them with one of the political parties of the time! By the time of the Presidential campaign of 1860 the custom prevailed throughout the Northern Church. The most violent partizan resolutions were everywhere adopted. Perhaps there was not a single Annual Conference that did not pass resolutions of this character. The whole Church threw itself with the utmost ardor into the campaign. We do not speak of the unanimity with which the individual members rushed into the strife, but of the official committal of the Church by the formal action of its ecclesiastical assemblies and the outgivings of its pulpit.

Of course, this was kept up during the war, and the resolutions took at that time a bloodthirsty tone that makes one's nerves shiver. After the war closed, still all the Conferences had their committees on the state of the country. We never saw more

virulent and indecent abuse of the Chief Magistrate of the Nation than appeared in the resolutions of Annual Conferences of the Northern Church during President Johnson's administration.

Persons who are curious on this subject may see copious specimens of the reports of these committees in a pamphlet compiled by Rev. R. Smithson, and published by the Southwestern Book and Publishing Company, St. Louis. For the last few years we have seen but little notice of such action by the Conferences. It remains to be seen what the coming Presidential canvass will bring forth. Let us hope that there may be no issue before the country, for some time to come, upon which these clerical politicians can create any public furore.

That preachers should have lost their balance during the war would not have been so very astounding. Great aberrations may be palliated, or even excused, in a time of unnatural and fearful excitements, such as are incident to a civil war. But these clerics

entered the political arena, as we have seen, several years before the war began, and kept it up in the most offensive form for several years after the war was closed. Nor has it ceased entirely to this day, though the grosser and more obtrusive clamor has measurably subsided.

It is matter of devout gratitude to the Head of the Church, that he has preserved one large body of the Methodist people of this country from political contamination. Even in the utmost stress of temptation during the war she kept herself, as a Church, unspotted from the world. Individual instances, no doubt, there were, but they were few, of the Southern preachers becoming unduly active in public affairs in connection with the events which immediately preceded the war. But the history of her Conference sessions is without a spot, and her pulpit, considering the nature and fury of the uproar in the midst of which it stood, preserved its poise in the most remarkable manner. It was a crucial test; but the habit

of exclusive consecration to God and his work had already been so fully established, and had acquired such muscle and fibre, as to be prepared for the shock.

Let it be noted, that what we condemn is not that moral support which the Church may give to the Government of the country in a time of public peril. Nor is it the hearty inculcation of obedience to the civil magistrate by the pulpit. The political history of the Church, North, is something wholly different from that. Both before and after the war, it *led* in the party conflict. Its Conference resolutions were *purely partizan.* It was not the *Government* to which it gave its support, but a political party. Indeed, it did not hesitate on occasion, in the service of its party, to villify the Government, and to speak evil of magistrates. Its loyalty to the Government was conditional. Loyalty was a virtue only when *its party* was in power. We predicate these things *of the Church;* for what was universal in the pulpit, and in the official transactions of the Con-

ferences, is, without question, to be attributed to the Church. What may be done by individual members of the Church, *as individuals*, *we* do not criticize in this connection.

Political partizanship on the part of the Church is to be condemned on several grounds:

First.—It renders the ministry of the Church unacceptable, and uninfluential with all who may be of the opposite faction.

Second.—It destroys the fact and consciousness of *consecration* in the pulpit. It induces a secular character in men who ought to be wholly devoted to God and his cause. In the case of ordained Methodist preachers who have solemnly promised to give themselves wholly to "this one thing," it is a gross violation of vows.

Third.—It breaks up that concentration which is an essential condition of the highest success in the Christian ministry. A divided mind cannot bring the full measure of its force to bear on any one object. When

God appropriates any man for his work, that work suffers in the measure of the diversion of personal force upon any other object.

Fourth.—Even amongst politicians, though they may be of his own stripe, the political preacher has, to say the least of it, an equivocal reputation. They may flatter him for the sake of the influence he has with his people, but the Gospel from *his* lips will do them no good. The sanctity of his calling ceases to attach to his person, however sanctimonious he may be. The ministry, the Church, and even religion itself, come into bad odor through this means.

Fifth.—Its effect in actual character is bad. The trade of the politician is demoralizing. The partisan wrangle is a strife of potsherds. The devil still takes men up into a high mountain, shows them the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and proffers them to such as will fall down and worship him. It required such power of integrity as was in the Son of Man to spurn the bribe. This mountain—the height from which men

see kingdoms and the glory of them — is strewn with debauched and prostrate souls, that fawn upon the devil for his gift. Are they not the tricksters, who stickle at no devil's work, who oftenest bear off the prize of place and power? But the country needs good men in office. Yea, verily. That end will never be secured, however, by the participation of the Church and the ministry in popular politics. She will only draggle her garments in the mud by such a course. Even now, many of the devil worshippers show reverent faces in the house of God on Sundays, and break the sacramental bread. Some there be who erect themselves from the profane prostration on the morning of the Lord s day, and enter the very pulpit to deliver the Lord's message to men. Their words are light as chaff. The Church can work toward a purer condition in public life only in an indirect way, by preaching the Gospel, and thus increasing the prevalence of Christian morals at large. It is not by preaching politics, and coming down to the

strife of potsherds, but by simply preaching Christ, that the ministry can accomplish any permanent good, either in this or any other field.

Sixth.—Ecclesiastics make the worst politicians in the world. It may be difficult to account for this, but it is certainly true. We do not say that the devout Christian does not make a good statesman. The enlightened Christian conscience is a high qualification for statesmanship. But we do say, that when ministers of religion try their hand at statesmanship, they always make a botch of the business. God never intended them for this service. Their standpoint is not favorable for it. It is altogether unfavorable in a country especially where the Church exists, as it must always where there is any liberty, in the form of distinct denominations.

Seventh.—When churches enter into politics bad men will seek connection with them for the sake of their influence. The Church will and must become corrupt in such a state of things.

Eighth.—The Church is the bride of Christ. She is debauched by political alliances. They are a breach of her marital vows. Her purity is lost when she goes after other lovers.

A church which becomes a politico-ecclesiastical organization is a hybrid—a cross between religion and politics. The progeny of this cross is a *monster*. The very conscience that comes from the spiritual side of its pedigree is fanatical and unnaturally sensitive, and by virtue of this it is always remorseless. It is a monster, and always a bloody one. The Inquisition was its work. It is the mystic Babylon, drunk with the blood of saints. It has had a delicious quaff of blood in this country within the last decade.

Into a church, into whose very texture political instincts and ambitions have been wrought, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is invited to merge her existence, and to sink it; for, as we have seen, being the smaller body, the Church, South, would be

lost in the union. She would simply swell the bulk of the larger unit by which she would be absorbed. If her existence has any meaning, it would be lost. If anything sacred and of high value has been committed to her custody, as she is distinguished from the Northern Church, the trust would fail, and her members be held responsible for the loss.

What she does stand for is given in the declaration of her dying Lord: "My kingdom is not of this world." This great fact, which contains within itself the purity and safety of the Church in all ages, has been committed to her keeping. The Church, South, so far as Methodism is concerned, is the custodian of this vital truth for the American continent, and for the coming ages. She cannot surrender her trust. Especially can she not, in view of the character of the hands into which she is invited to place it. She is invited to place it in the hands of the very party from which God separated her, that she might be able to keep it. Impossible!

There are not wanting good-natured and well-meaning people who say: "Let by-gones be by-gones. Let the dead past bury its dead." That is all very well, and very right, so far as any resentful feeling may be involved. But he is a great blockhead who learns nothing from the past. It must be confessed, however, that the world is full of such blockheads. They are ready to run into any spider's parlor, if the gracious proprietor will but be very unctious in his invitations, and sing them a pretty song. But, as we read history and human nature, a church that has once run the career which the Church North has run within the last quarter of a century, can never after be safely trusted. She may have many devoted members and ministers. Indeed, the masses of her people may be pure. Her ministry may yet lead many to Christ. Her foreign missions may contribute much to widen the area of the kingdom of God. But, in time of temptation, she can never be safely trusted with this deposit: "My kingdom is not of this world."

Apologists plead, this Church surely is not wholly or very deeply debauched. Her unhallowed alliance with politics and parties was the result of a great temptation. The circumstances were peculiar, and the case is not likely to recur. Such a temptation will hardly arise again in the history of our country. The conscience of the Northern people was sensitive on the subject of slavery, and now that it is out of the way it is not likely that anything else will arise to complicate the Christian conscience with politics.

This is very amiable and easy-going talk, but it proceeds upon a most superficial view of the facts. This Church has acquired a *political habit*, which is the growth of more than a quarter of a century. An inveterate habit is a *law* of both individual and associate life. What people, or societies, once get into a way of doing, they are sure to continue doing. And as for the occasions which may complicate conscience with politics, nothing is more certain than that they

will be perpetually arising. The negro-equality question, the labor question, the Mormon question, the liquor-law question, and many others, on grounds true or fallacious, will appeal to the Christian conscience at the polls. Nothing is more likely than that the Northern Church, as a church, officially, through its Conferences and its pulpit, will ally itself with ephemeral, but noisy, exasperated and exasperating parties and squabbles on these and similar questions. The *habit* is formed, and the fanatical conscience is waiting for some agitation to inflame it into excruciating sensitiveness. Already there have been premonitory, undertone out-givings from influential sources on the subject of female suffrage. The Southern Church cannot afford to put itself into such a category. The members and ministers have done and suffered too much as the representatives of an unsecular, non-political Church, to sacrifice it now upon the beguilement of a newly-awakened sentimentalism in our neighbors. They must pre-

serve the Church unspotted from the world. They have suffered contumely, poverty, and peril. They have been despoiled of churches, and parsonages, and schools. Some have suffered martyrdom. They have resisted unto blood, standing against the political defilement of the Church. The great principle—the exclusiveness of the spiritual vocation of the Church—they have preserved intact. Their struggles are historical, and the history is a sign of good things to come. It is a testimony—a testimony that the world cannot afford to lose. It witnesses against adulterous defections of the Church from Christ. They cannot now extinguish the lamp of their own history by hiding it under the bushel of a Church more deeply stained with political corruptions than any other in America. It would be pitiable recreancy to indulge the thought.

It has been suggested that the two Churches may unite on the basis of a written compact that will guarantee the future. Will they bind themselves to abjure poli-

tics as a fundamental condition of union? We do not like to use the word silly, but we can think of no other epithet that will fully characterize this proposition. It is folly to suppose that the Northern Church would consent to bind itself by stipulations, that would imply self-incrimination in a course with which it is supremely well satisfied.

But suppose it would. Suppose the compact written, signed, sealed, and delivered. Suppose it all solemnly enacted in the constitutional law of the reunited Church. Is there a man living in America, who is thirty years old, who puts any trust in constitutional compacts and guarantees? If there is, his mental machinery moves slowly, indeed. Individuals may be bound by instruments of writing, but communities—never!

Constitutions were made for the protection of minorities. So say the statesmen. In point of fact, they protect minorities only so long as the majority is complacent. Let that fierce hydra, the majority, be once

aroused by a great interest, or a great passion, and the Constitution is as a straw fence against fire. Innocent boys contemplate the Constitution with awe, and learn with loyal pride and satisfaction at the hustings, from the Hon. Senator Platitudo, that it is the Palladium of our Liberties. But veteran politicians know how to use it as a catch-word, and the great rabble—*they all vote*—discover after a while that "the Constitution is a league with hell."[1] Then what becomes of its sacred compacts and guarantees? Sacred compacts and constitutional provisions fare no otherwise with the ecclesiastical voter than with the political. Witness the action of the majority in the General Conference of 1844. It is no better in the Church than in the State, so far as constitutional protection of minorities is concerned. Any great passion or furious fanaticism sweeps the paper break-water into oblivion. Stop a tidal wave with a sheet of foolscap! Perhaps it is worse

1 "The Constitution is a league with hell." This language was popular with Abolitionists before the war. We make this note for the benefit of such readers as may be too young to have been familiar with the popular politics of the ante-war period.

in the ecclesiastical than in the civil community, for there conscience comes in. At first blush, one would expect conscience to support the faith of the community plighted in written stipulations. But, in fact, it always turns out in times of fanatical upheaval, that conscience never seems concerned about breaking faith. *That* never troubles it. It is concerned only to realize the fanatical idea of the hour. There only it gripes. The presence of pledges and promises gives it no trouble. It seems not to be conscious of them. If they are in the way of the dominant idea, the conscientious agony gives fury to the wave that assails them. Woe to him who puts his trust in this Egypt.

Was it Montaigne who said, "The way of the world is to *make* laws, but to *follow* customs?" It is true, and it is a very profound truth. Constitutions that are made never last long. The close of the eighteenth century in France was as notable for the Constitutions it produced as for the violence with which they were thrown aside. They

were wonderful instruments; philosophical, logical, and at once broad and minute. They were hailed with rapture, and inaugurated with triumph, only to be washed out with blood.

If men hesitate to destroy a Constitution by violence, they will fritter it away by explanation and construction. Mr. Webster himself construed the American Constitution crosswise. At one time, in his speeches, its doctrine was this, at another time it was that—just the reverse—according to the exigencies of the argument in hand. The flexibility of words in the hands of a master is most marvellous. Besides all this, when a majority becomes very strong, the Constitution may be amended with great facility; so that by amending it, or construing it away, or by trampling it under foot, the majority will get rid of all restraints of a written Constitution, when it stands in the way of their will.

The only Constitutions that have sufficient tenacity to hold against a heavy popular

pressure are the *unwritten*—such as the Roman Civil Law, and the English Common Law. They are the only *actual Constitutions*. They are simply the habit of the organic life out of which they have grown. They are the only organic laws which give any assurance of the character of the future. *Organized communities are governed by their own habit.* This never fails to override the most formal written enactments when they come into violent conflict with it. Many recent statutes are dead letters, because such is the state of *public opinion*, or rather, such is the public habit, that they cannot be enforced.

If you would form any safe opinion as to the future course of any organized community, look not at written compacts and constitutional guarantees, called into existence by some occasion, but read its history. Find the direction of its current. Study its life. Ascertain its habits.

No fact of American history is more patent than that it is the habit of the Methodist

Episcopal Church to invade the domain of the State—to run into politics. It feels itself charged with the management of State affairs in important cases.

To make the matter worse, she has a political history that she is proud of. The people, and especially the preachers of this Church, feel that, as a church, they have done more to bring about the present condition of things in the country than any other class of people. They review their career as political agitators with the utmost complacency. It has been successful. It has been brilliant. Not only in politics, but in war, they have run a triumphant course. It is a heroic history. They look upon themselves as having "saved the country." They carry with them the consciousness of the conqueror and the benefactor—all the result of the part they took in the politics of the country.

So far as the past and the present can possibly give assurance of the future, it is certain that on all occasions that offer an issue, in which the Methodist conscience may

deem itself concerned, the ecclesiastics of the Northern Church will be ready to go headlong into the canvass. She will be ever and anon upon the hustings. Her pulpit will again resound with the declamation of the demagogue, and her pews will send back the loud huzza.

This is the more certain, also, because she has tasted the delicious rewards of the partizan. One of her chief ministers, soon after the war closed, in an address, which was published, boasted that his Church had given more moral support and more men to the war than any other, and affirmed that a grateful government had recognized the service by giving many profitable contracts to members of it. Only let the occasion come, then, and this history will be repeated.

Happy will the people be if the same Church shall not precipitate another war. It seems likely that all the varied scenes of history are to be enacted over again in our country. We have had a war of independence—the war of 1776. We have had a

commercial war—the war of 1812. We have had insurrections—the whisky rebellion, and the Harper's Ferry raid. We have had a war of conquest—the war with Mexico. We have had, also, a great civil war. War is the staple of history, and, in all probability, we have not done with it, but have only had our foretaste. Is there not brewing already an agrarian war? Does not the firmament also portend a religious war?

The Romish Church has always been unscrupulous in its methods. It will advance itself by political or any other means available. It is by no means impossible that, in coming political complications, there may be a time when Romanism will hold the balance of power. The example of ecclesiastical interference in the affairs of government has already been set. The public mind has been familiarized with it. The Methodist Church, North, has pioneered the way for the Romanist, and when his opportunity arrives he will not be slow to follow. Then there will be manœuvering and counter-

manœuvering, and provocation will respond to provocation. We vainly thought the civil war impossible. If we imagine a war of religion impossible in this country, we have studied history and human nature to little purpose. And when the fray comes the Northern Methodist will be the eager hot-spur first in the saddle. The history of his Church, and the consciousness resulting from it, will insure this.

The country will need the Southern Church, then—a Church whose history is a history of devotion to Christ, and whose habit is that of undivided consecration to the work of God. God's battles are to be fought with the sword of the Spirit, by witnessing for him in prayer, and faith, and suffering. He has reserved to himself a Methodist Church in this country against the time of trial. When Apocalyptic portents shall shadow and darken the land, let us pray that he may have one Church, at least—and let us trust that he may have more than one—that shall have kept unspotted garments, and have no part nor lot with Babylon.

This non-political character of the Church, South, as distinguished from the Church, North, is, as we conceive, the most vital point of difference between the two bodies. It is a difference so fundamental, affecting the constitution of the Church so deeply, that there can be no question as to the obligation of the Southern Church. All the deadliest apostacies of the Christian community have originated from ambitious connections with the State. From Constantine down, undue alliances between the ecclesiastic and the magistrate have originated and been the cause of all those monstrous corruptions which at times have threatened to make religion a hissing and a by-word in the earth forever. The Southern Church separated from the Northern that she might keep out of politics. Each has followed the logic of 1844. The *cause* of the division has not been removed, but aggravated by the war. It has even taken a bolder form, it has cast aside all masks. This *cause*, the *penchant* of the Northern Church for politics, was dis-

guised under plausible pretexts then; now it shows itself proudly, and challenges admiration. Conferences are turned into political conventions in the face of the world. No, no! The cause of the division is not removed, but has become apparent to all eyes, and exists in a more aggravated form than ever.

The second position which we refer to, as having been insisted on by Southern men in the General Conference of 1844, was that *the law of the Church*, in pending cases which involved the question of slavery, *was supreme*, and the cases must be dealt with according to the law. There were two cases of this kind before the General Conference—the appeal of Harding, and the case of Bishop Andrew. The only demand made by the Southern delegates was, that the law should be respected. It was well known, on all sides, that there was no law which had been violated by these men. On the contrary, there were positive statutory provisions which held them harmless. The question

was not whether two men should suffer, nor was it whether slavery should be upheld. Slavery was merely the occasion upon which *the supremacy of the law was tested.*

For the *law* the majority showed no respect. Their own *idea* was the only law with them. The written law of the Church gave them no pause. They would carry their idea into effect, either without law or against law, as the case might be.

Upon discovering this, the conservative Southern mind took alarm. The situation was of the gravest character. The question was between *law* and *lawlessness.* Were all rights and interests of the Church at the mere mercy of majorities? It had come to this. Harding had violated no law of the Church, but had been subjected to heavy church penalties under an arbitrary *rule* of an Annual Conference. The *Church law* protected him, in terms, against the operation of the Conference rule. Nothing doubting that the law would be respected by the highest Church court, he made his appeal to that august

assemblage. But the appeal only furnished the occasion for enacting the most extraordinary judicial farce that was ever produced upon so high a stage. The appellant had violated no law; so far from it, the law, in terms, covered him and held him guiltless; yet the finding of the court below against him was confirmed.

The *animus* of the Southern Church is *law-abiding*. This may properly be called the *habit* of the body. Its high sense of the sacredness of the law is a part of the unwritten law of this Church. This is its real Constitution. And in this fact is found a second *cause* of the division. It was named with emphasis in the formal and solemn protest made by the Southern ministry. This protest was read in open Conference, and spread upon its journal.

Is there any reason to suppose that the Northern Church has changed in this particular? What token of improvement has been given? So far as we can see, none. But by every token given in its political

career we must judge it to be confirmed in this habit of setting the idea of the hour above all law. This trait has been deepened and rendered inveterate instead of being cured. The war, which is believed to have removed so many things (as no doubt it has), and is fondly asserted to have removed the *cause* of the division of the Church, has not removed *this* cause, but aggravated it. The Southern Church cannot put her liberties upon such a tenure as the will of a majority—any majority—much less that which would be dominant in the reunited Church.

Incidental to the question of law, there arose, in the case of Bishop Andrew, a question as to the *status* of Bishops in the Methodist Church, which developed a radical difference of opinion between the majority and the minority of the Conference. The opinion never obtained among Methodists anywhere, that the Episcopacy was a distinct *order* from that of Elders. Indeed, the Methodist Episcopacy flowed from a Presbyterial fountain. It sprang from Mr. Wesley, and he

was never, by virtue of a formal ordination, anything more than a Presbyter. The Bishop is distinguished from the other Elders only by a special provision of the church in which he holds his office. His *status* is determined by the legislation and usages of his particular church.

Certain leaders of the Northern party, in 1844, affirmed the doctrine, that Bishops were only officers of the General Conference, the same as Book Agents and Editors, and might be appointed and removed at will, for any cause. They were the mere creatures of the Conference, which might do what it pleased with them, and as it pleased. On this ground it was maintained that Bishop Andrew might be deposed without any form of trial, for any reason, no matter what, and in the most summary way.

Against these propositions the minority made issue. They asserted that so far from Bishops being creatures of the General Conference, their office originated before there was a General Conference. Mr. Wesley was,

in the providence of God, the Bishop of all the Methodist societies in the world; that is, he was their Superintendent, for that is what a Methodist Bishop is. In fact, Mr. Wesley preferred that title. He designated Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury for this office in America. Dr. Coke he ordained in England, and authorized him, on his arrival in America, to ordain Mr. Asbury. Mr. Asbury, indeed, submitted his case to the brethren in Conference, and was not ordained until they had approved his designation. Thus the history of the office shows it not to be the creature of the General Conference at all, but to have sprung from another source. The written law makes it a part of the very organism of the Church. Its existence and functions are guarded with great jealousy by the Restrictive Rules. Both by the written law and by uniform usage it is a fundamental, organic part of the Church. The Bishops, then, are not mere officers of the General Conference, but a co-ordinate branch of the government with the Conference. They are at the head of the

executive department of the Church. The functions of their office, as defined by law, clearly show this to be the case.

The fact of their solemn ordination, together with the character of the vows required of them, is inconsistent with the hypothesis that they are mere officers, removable at will. You cannot think of a Book Agent, or a Missionary Secretary, being ordained with such forms, or put under such vows, as a condition of entering upon his office.

That the tenure of their office is not the mere will of the General Conference, is further evident from the fact that a form of trial of Bishops is a part of the statutory law of the Church. They can be deposed only under form of trial, upon being found guilty of some act adjudged to be sufficient to disqualify them for their high office.

The Bishops are at the head of the executive administration of the Church, but they are not mere administrative officers. They have a pastoral function—the care of all the

Churches. They are to promote, by all rightful means, the peace, purity, and growth of the Church. In the Annual Conferences they are not mere presiding officers, with power to station the preachers; they are also pastors, whose duty it is to promote all the interests of religion according to the wisdom that is in them. Their executive authority is great. In them are lodged the tremendous forces which are to keep the vast itinerant machinery in play. The organ of such forces must be well placed. It cannot be efficient as a side attachment. It must be at the heart of the organization, and fixed upon a stable foundation. Doubtless its powers must be duly limited, and regulated, too, as they are by the laws of the Church.

Legislative bodies need, also, some checks and balances upon them. Unlimited range of functions is dangerous in any body of men. Nothing is more common than hasty, ill-considered legislation under excitement. The distribution of powers between legislative and executive organs is always wise.

Neither one must be the incident of the other. Each must inhere in the constitution of the body. Each must have an organic position in the society.

The Episcopacy is integral in the structure of Methodism; not accidental. It is an organ of the Church itself, and not merely of the General Conference.

The doctrine of the majority in this, as in other cases, was radical and disorganizing; that of the minority conservative, and tending to order and stability. Of itself this difference would not have caused a division of the Church, but, added to the other more vital causes, it had its weight, and constitutes to-day one of the many reasons which render it important that the Church, South, should maintain its separate existence.

For these reasons it is not likely that it will ever be compatible with the obligations of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to God and to the world, to allow itself to be absorbed. If it should desert its post, some other organization would arise to take its

place, and to do its work. It is a place among the Churches that cannot long remain vacant. The exigencies of religion in the country would evoke such a Church into being. This Church fills the place exactly, and its history qualifies it well for the work it has to do.

But if a union of the two Methodist Churches should ever be desirable, the movement would be premature at any very early day. For several reasons, it is altogether impracticable at present.

In the first place, the Church, South, is in no circumstances to offer or receive overtures looking to union, with any self-respect. She stands in the eyes of the world officially and formally discredited by the General Conference of the other Church. She held out the right hand of fellowship in 1848, and was refused. No *amende* has ever been made, no apology, and no retraction. A question, therefore, precedent to union, is the question of fraternal relations. In the present attitude of affairs negotiations to that end must

be initiated by the Northern General Conference. As a condition of fraternal relations, the indignity of 1848 must be thoroughly wiped out. It is extremely doubtful if this will ever be done.

If this were done, there remains a history to which we refer with reluctance. Northern Methodists, when we approach this history, are very much in the habit of saying, "let by-gones be by-gones." No doubt they would be glad now if it could be buried in the sea. But the ghosts of unnatural crimes will not down, and this is a history of unnatural crimes. It is a history, too, that bears immediately upon the question of reunion at an early day, and for that reason cannot be ignored so long as that question is pressed.

We speak of the seizure and occupancy of the property of the Church, South, by the officials of the Church, North, during the war, and soon after its close. This property consisted of churches, parsonages, and schools, with furniture, sacramental service, and ap-

purtenances generally. Some of these houses were found out of use, where Southern preachers had been driven out of the country, or silenced by terror, and entered in a peaceable way. Some were taken by military order, some by military terrorism, and some by mob violence. In some instances the keys were borrowed and never returned. They left no stone unturned to get possession of property belonging to the Southern Church. Nor was this only during the war. It was kept up in some places after the war closed. Nor did the dawn of peace bring the restoration of the property. Some of it was recovered, as the churches in New Orleans, by order of the President of the United States. And at New Orleans the order was resisted, and the restoration delayed as long as possible. Some was given up at the end of law suits. And, with a *very few* honorable exceptions, it was held until it became certain, from the number of cases decided, that the courts would restore the property to its rightful owners. *Then* compromises

were sought, and not till then. In East Tennessee, if we are not mistaken, they still hold much of this property, nearly seven years after the close of the war. In Missouri, where the courts had all been reorganized by the appointment of extreme Radicals, they seemed to depend on the partizan character of the bench to obtain a title that would settle them in possession. But, to the honor of the Missouri judiciary, partizan as it was, it refused to be made the tool of ecclesiastical plunderers.

The seizure and holding of the property of another Church was participated in by laymen and preachers of the Northern Church, alike, and passed under the eyes of Conferences and Bishops unrebuked, if not encouraged. Most likely it was encouraged; otherwise the men more immediately engaged would have been ashamed of their work. One Bishop was appealed to in vain. The pastor of a church in Charleston, South Carolina, made a pilgrimage to Philadelphia, persuaded that his old acquaintance, the

Bishop, would interfere with the authority of his great name, and have his house restored to him. But in vain. He got neither redress nor sympathy. He was, however, cooly informed that the "disintegration and absorption policy" had been inaugurated, through the means of which, with the blessing of God, the help of a gracious government, and the liberal use of money, all the property and all the people of the Southern Church would be gotten possession of. The blessing of God, however, seems not to have rested upon the scheme; the government was not so gracious as it was expected to be; and the money—missionary money it was—though used without stint, seems not to have been so potent an agency in the South as was hoped. So the "disintegration and absorption policy" turned out to be a humiliating *faux pas*.

But there was the *animus*. No Conference, nor any Bishop, lifted a voice against this appropriation of property that was not their own. The fair inference is, that all,

with a common lust of acquisition, strengthened each other's hands in the crime.

To make the matter worse, they undertook to deny the deed. Their weekly press scrupled at no false statement. Annual Conferences resorted to the most disingenuous evasions. Even the General Conference of 1868, upon a memorial from the Holston Conference of the Church, South, met the facts with statements in the last degree unfair and untrue.

Taking all the facts together, we can do no otherwise than hold the Church, North, as a church, responsible for this predatory movement. Many of their preachers were leaders in it. The property was officially reported at the Conference sessions, and published in the official statistics of the Church. The Bishops, with full knowledge of the facts, appointed men to occupy these houses. From no quarter, even yet, so far as we know, has there been any official rebuke or disclaimer. It is, by every token, the public, formal, official crime of the Metho-

dist Episcopal Church. Of course, there are bad men in all churches. But we suppose there have been few, if any, instances of Protestant Churches committing such a public breach of fundamental morals in any official way. This Church, as a church, stands thus convicted before the world. Every particular Bishop, every particular preacher, every particular editor, by his silence and his acquiescence, becomes *particeps criminis*.

There was a rare spectacle at Memphis, during the session of the General Conference of 1870. A Bishop of the Northern Church stood before the Conference to plead for union. We looked upon him with emotions of a strange sort. He had a meek expression, and spoke tremulously. His voice seemed to be weeping gently, though his eyes were not. There he stood and plead for union, and even used the name of Christ. We were amazed! The import of what he said, taken with the *facts*, which he did not say, was this: "We have been taking your property wherever we could, and keeping it

as long as we could. I have myself been appointing men to occupy your houses whenever the opportunity arose. But O, dear brethren, let us love one another, and let us be one in Christ!" The whole scene was a study for the psychologist.

The great majority of the private members of the Church are to be held blameless. They do not know the facts. If they have chanced to hear of Bishop Ames' exploit,[1] they are told that it was a war measure, and that the property was restored promptly after the war closed. The last part of the statement is false; but, of course, they believe it to be true. They could not do otherwise. If they have heard of other cases, they are told the property belonged to the Church before the division in 1844, and their Church being the old Church, the property rightly belonged to them. It is very natural that they should receive all this without

1 For further information, for the detail of facts, and for proof, the reader is referred to *Martyrdom in Missouri*, by Rev. W. M. Leftwich, published by the Southwestern Book and Publishing Company. A copy of the Stanton-Ames Order, and many other curious and startling facts, are given in this book.

question. But the statement contains two falsehoods. In the first instance, the property that belonged to the Church before the division, and fell within the area of the Southern Church, was adjudged by the courts of law to belong, under the stipulations of the Plan of Separation, to that Church. The taking of this class of property was, therefore, a plain violation of property rights. But they did by no means confine their takings to the property that had been held before the separation. Much of that which was taken had been acquired by the Southern Church after the division of the Church, and the title was in the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. There are many laymen, doubtless, in the North whose indignation would be boundless if they knew only the sober facts of the case.

This bad history has made reunion impossible for at least a generation. There can not be the confidence and respect for the men engaged in this business which would make church fellowship with them profitable,

or even tolerable. This is a piece of history which Southern men can by no means consent to identify themselves with. The actors in it must die before any actual union can be consummated, or even thought of with complacency.

The proposition for a reunion comes, moreover, at an inopportune moment. Just when the effort to "disintegrate and absorb" is demonstrated to be a failure the movement for reunion comes up. The change of policy and tone are too sudden. Those warm words smoke with a suspicious odor. The flavor of "disintegration and absorption" seems to linger in them. Do they mean absorption without disintegration? Time ought to have been given for fumigation, to clear away the effluvium of the so recently dead "policy." Do not these warm words smack, also, of a move on the political chess-board? Is there not a purpose to swell the church census and gain prestige, so as to "control the government?" Is this, and *not* brotherly love and the salvation of souls, the real end of absorp-

tion, with or without disintegration? These vapors *will* arise out of the grave of the dead policy. They appear in the dark, with a weird, phosphorescent aspect, to give us warning. They take spectral forms, that seem to mutter broken sentences of resolutions we have seen reported by "committees on the state of the country," and adopted by unanimous acclamation in Annual Conferences. They bring echoes, at the same time, from our memory of things we were wont to see, not more than two or three years gone, in Northern Methodist prints, to the effect that the Southern Church was a rebel church, that the war had ended too soon; intimating that because it did not at once strike its colors to the conquering Church, it was to be suspected; as if the war had been made in the interest of a sectional and domineering ecclesiasticism, which was wronged and injured in the failure of the war to make a conquest of a neighboring Church for it. There was much impatient and petulant speech of this sort. That the Church, South,

should still live, and thrive, and go on doing the Lord's work, in its own proper field, after its neighbor of the North had contributed so much treasure and blood, yea, and prayer, too, for its destruction, seemed intolerable. These men seemed to think that the war had been made upon the Southern Church as well as upon the Confederate Government, and for their behoof. The political habit had become so deeply wrought into the ecclesiastical consciousness, that they blended themselves in their church affairs and ambitions with the "Government" perpetually. That the "Government" should succeed, and *their* conquest fail, was too bad. They had helped the Government so lustily, too, and had borne it on to a grand triumph, and now, in the hour of its victory, it left the Southern Church, their coveted prize, to go on in peace right before the face of them.

We repeat it, before the invitation was sent to the banquet of love, there ought to have been time given for fumigation. These odors ought to have been cleared away.

But this inquiry is sometimes met: "Other Christian bodies, North and South, flowed together readily enough after the war closed, and why should the Southern Presbyterian and Southern Methodist Churches persist in maintaining a separate existence?" The Presbyterians will answer for themselves. For the Methodists we have to say, that, so far as we know, no Christian bodies that were distinct from each other, North and South, before the war, have come together since. The Old and New School Presbyterian Churches that united were both situated in the Northern States, and they seemed to come together more from common *political* than from spiritual instincts. And, besides, in the case of those broken churches which reunited so readily, the Northern sections of them did not enter into the political contests which precipitated the war with the eager and vociferous zeal of the Northern Methodists, nor did they make themselves especially conspicuous during the war, nor yet did they lead the hue and cry against the help-

less South after she had capitulated, as the Methodists of the North did for several years. Nor yet do they introduce themes and phrases into the pulpit that grate upon the ear and heart of the Southern people. If the Northern preachers had only kept themselves clear of political agitations, and consecrated themselves to the work of Christ exclusively, how easy reunion would have been! But people are not won by hearing themselves berated and abused in one ear and cajoled in the other. One hundreth part of the sweet words that have been wasted on the Southern ear in the last two years would have melted everything before them, if they had been commended to the heart by the emphasis of good deeds.

But the Northern Church seeks fraternity and love—the Southern refuses. This has an ungracious look! After all, however, two facts must not be overlooked. First, the overtures that have been made were made on a strained construction of the terms of authorization. No properly accredited mes-

sage has been sent. Secondly, the press of that Church is by no means unanimous for union.

In conclusion, fraternity must come before union, and the movement must come from the Northern General Conference. The Southern General Conference made the overture at its first session, and awaits the result with quiet dignity. At the time she met a rebuff, and is unconcerned as to what may follow. If the *amende* should be made, doubtless there may be fraternity, official and formal, with such measure of cordiality as the future may warrant. Indeed, so far as fraternity is concerned, the offer of the Church, South, is of twenty-four years' standing. It ill becomes those who have been treating her offer with silent contempt for more than a score of years to begin all of a sudden now to boast of their charity in contrast with hers. On this point, with a conscience void of offence, she rests her case with God.

As for organic coalescence, the repellent

history of a decade renders that impossible, until the healer, time, shall have had full opportunity to do its work.

In the interval, the political habit of the Northern Church is likely to reassert itself so as to make reunion altogether undesirable. There must be maintained on this continent a Methodist Church free from all such defilement, not complicated with factions, nor ambitious of government patronage. There must be a Methodist Church whose breath shall not smell of the potations of Babylon, whose eye shall not be red from the vigils of the caucus, whose voice shall not be cracked by the mad brawl of the hustings.

Time, the great healer, must have opportunity. Let us hope that his work may be done. But time does other work besides. Is he not, also, the destroyer? There are breaches that he does not heal. They are as when waters break forth. We must stand in our lot. The future must be left to the men of the future, and to God. Those who shall have the affairs of the Church in charge

fifty years hence will be as wise as we. Let us pray that they may be much more wise. Fifty years hence God will be listening to the prayers of his people. Fifty years hence—we can not doubt it—there will be a Methodist Church in the land, in poise amid the factions of the hour, pure amid its temptations, her candlestick still in his place, her light burning with the pure flame of inspiration and faith, her eye lifted, her hands clean from bribes, her robes of linen clean and white, the righteousness of saints washed in the blood of the Lamb; revered by all who love the Lord Jesus, and hated only by his enemies; her children dwelling in peace in the south and in the north, in the west and in the east, with Republican and Democrat, Radical and Conservative, alike calling her blessed. She will excite the suspicion and hatred of none by allying herself with an adverse party upon issues that arouse the passions of the hour, but lie outside of her proper sphere. She will move with a grand but quiet energy amid the

affairs of men, the representative of Christ to all, the political ally or enemy of none. She will stand for Christ, recognized by all, upon a plane far above the level of those contests which come and go with the energy and the swiftness of the tornado. She will abjure both the riches and the power which might reward a lewd and bewitching coquetry with some successful party in the State. She will be known, and loved, and hated, as the chaste spouse of Christ. Her character will give full force and meaning to the word of God committed to her.

This is the destiny of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a destiny that she can not alienate. She must "stand in her lot to the end of the days."

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